



Ho, Ho, Hold Onto Your Receipts and Other Return Tips

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Media Contact: Jerad Albracht, 608-224-5007
Jim Dick, Communications Director, 608-224-5020

MADISON – It seems strange to think about gift returns before you’ve even finished your holiday shopping, but the time to consider the return process is BEFORE the presents are home and wrapped. If a gift recipient needs to return or exchange an item, the steps you take now will help make the process that much simpler. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection advises consumers to familiarize themselves with the return policies for the items they purchase and to keep their purchase documentation organized throughout the holiday season.

“It is a gift giver’s responsibility to understand each store’s specific rules before purchasing a present for a friend or family member,” said Sandy Chalmers, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. “Before you make a purchase, check the store’s policies to see if there are restocking fees or other issues that could cost you or the recipient more money if they need to make a return.”

Remember to keep your receipts handy and to pick up a gift receipt at the time of purchase. Before you wrap the item, pack the gift receipt in the box or tape it to the front or side of the box to ensure that the recipient doesn’t overlook it. Some stores will not honor a return or refund request without a receipt.

Other simple return tips include:

- Stores are required by law to honor the return guidelines they represent to consumers. If the store’s policy is not posted, ask a salesperson or manager about the terms before making a purchase.
- Know that different stores have different policies. Store policies may differ by item as well.
- Pay attention to the time frame allotted by the retailer for returns. Find out if the countdown to the last day for returns begins on the date of original purchase of the item or if there are extended holiday return timeframes.
- As you’re wrapping gifts, leave the price tags and UPC codes intact and keep the original packaging. Some stores charge a restocking fee for opened items or those without their packaging – especially electronics.
- Understand any conditions that apply when you buy items on sale or clearance. Some stores may not allow you to return these items.
- If you are shopping by phone or online, find out who pays return shipping fees if you have a problem with the product. Does the retailer pay those fees or does the consumer? Are return shipping fees deducted from the refund amount?

If you believe a retailer is not honoring its posted return policy, file a complaint with the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.

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